

City teamwork tames the torrents of a river with sandbag banks

By Gina Caldwell

Deseret News correspondent

PROVO — Disaster is not quite an accurate description of the flooding on Fourth South on Monday night.

Sure, the water was there, flowing through a channel of sandbags, four thick and six high. Also there were excited children, joggers, bikers and hikers, strollers and babies, moms and dads and a few hundred volunteers.

Pizzas were delivered, and an occasional water fight interrupted a family picnic. All the residents will remember the spring that a river of muddy water came down their street.

Volunteers and city employees have worked since Thursday filling and placing sandbags along the street to build a channel for water diverted from Slate Canyon, city employee Jim Mathis said.

Warm weather has speeded the snow melt, increasing the flow of water from the mountains. Precautionary measures were taken to keep the water from filling basins in the canyon.

The water was diverted from about Ninth East along Third and Fourth South to Second East and into the storm-drain system.

City workers can let water out of the Slate Canyon basin into the sandbag channel, leaving enough capacity in the basin to allow workers to control the flow of water entering the city.

When the first water trickled down the sandbag river, excited children raced up and down the street, following the water and informing residents.

Peak runoff hit the neighborhood about 8 p.m. Monday. The flow was about 3 feet high at the beginning of the homemade channel, which is about 6 feet wide. That much water ran through the area for a couple of hours.

"Crews will be monitoring the water throughout the night," city Personnel Director Eric Mauser said.

Mauser directed about 50 volunteers Monday placing the 15,000 sandbags to build the channel.

"We had volunteers from Provo High School here for three hours, and they really helped us out," he said.

Volunteers were solicited through the day over the radio and television, and the response was good, he said. People wanting to volunteer should call the mayor's office, 373-1822, or the police

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PHOTOGRAPHY/GARY MCKELLAR

Provo High School students help place the 15,000 sandbags that created a sturdy channel.



Official emergency in Utah County, and worst days coming

By Michael Morris
Deseret News staff writer

PROVO — Mudslides and flooding have already begun to take their toll throughout Utah County, but the worst is yet to come, according to County Engineer Clyde R. Naylor.

Damage from spring runoff prompted Utah County commissioners Monday to declare the county in a state of emergency and disaster, giving county officials the opportunity to apply for state assistance in dealing with runoff damage. The declaration follows an emergency commission meeting Saturday and a request by Springville officials to have the county declared a disaster

PHOTOGRAPHY/ GARY McKELLAR

Cars near Payson creep through runoff water that covers I-15. Mud, water flows already exceed spring of '83.

area.

"Because there is imminent danger to life and property, I would move that we . . . execute a disaster emergency declaration," Commissioner Gary Anderson said.

"This is far from a regular flooding situation," Naylor told the commissioners Monday. He reported on a Sunday mudslide that severely damaged at least one house about three miles up Spanish Fork Canyon in the Covered Bridge area. He also said flooding had destroyed or severely damaged five bridges in Hobbie Creek and Spanish Fork canyons.

"These flows right now are in excess of last year's — every one of them," Naylor said. "And all indications are that flooding will be worse than last year's unless the weather tempers on us. Spanish Fork and Hobbie Creek are already above what they were last year. And Utah Lake is already high — about 2 inches

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